

# **Report on Act 46 of 2015**

**An act relating to making amendments to education funding, education spending, and education governance**

**Sec. 47 Principals and Superintendents Study and Proposal**

**REPORT**  
November 2015

**Submitted to House and Senate Education Committees**

**Submitted by Secretary of Education  
Rebecca Holcombe**



## **Legislation**

[Act 46 of 2015](#) *An act relating to making amendments to education funding, education spending, and education governance*

Link to complete text of legislation on Vermont Legislature website:

<http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2016/Docs/ACTS/ACT046/ACT046%20As%20Enacted.pdf>.

## **Objective of Report**

*Sec. 47. PRINCIPALS AND SUPERINTENDENTS; STUDY AND PROPOSAL*

*On or before January 15, 2016, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont School Boards Association, and the Vermont Principals' Association, shall develop and present to the House and Senate Committees on Education a proposal to clarify the roles of superintendents as systems managers and principals as instructional leaders. The proposal shall also address superintendents' and principals' relative responsibilities of supervision and evaluation.*

## **Context of the Report**

Throughout the summer of 2015, Agency staff drafted language and communicated with leadership of the VSBA, VPA and VSA on possible recommendations for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of administrators within the structure of our education governance system here in Vermont.

It should be noted that due to the significant changes to governance structures contemplated in Act 46 of 2015, there is a need for the roles of school boards and supervisory union boards to also be examined, which is why that is reflected in some of the findings within this report.

The duties and responsibilities of administrators are spelled out in both Vermont Statute and State Board Rules.

Specifically, V.S.A. 16, [§242 Duties of Superintendents](#); [§243 Principals: Appointment, renewal and dismissal](#), [§244 Duties of Principals](#). Additional roles and responsibilities are spelled out in State Board of Education Rule 2121.1 as part of the [Education Quality Standards \(rule series 2000\)](#) the Board is required to promulgate under V.S.A. §165.

## **Summary of Results**

The Agency is making only one statutory change recommendation. Currently V.S.A. 16 §243 requires notice of non-renewal of principal's contract at least 90 days before the

existing contract expires (for a principal who has been continuously employed for more than two years in the same position). The education partners and Agency recommend “on or before February 1” be inserted in place of “at least 90 days before the existing contract expires.” Accelerating the notice of non-renewal of a principal’s contract to February 1 will provide both the principal and the school district an additional 60 days’ time to pursue options for the next school year. Presently, the 90-day window prior to contract expiration (on or about April 1) leaves little time for principals in this situation, and school districts, to engage a thorough search for another employment opportunity (for the departing principal) and a replacement principal (for the school district). This proposed change in law to earlier notice (no later than February 1) would help to ensure a fairer process for the departing principal, a better search process for the employer school district, and would solidify school leadership before offering contracts to teachers and support staff. Therefore, the recommendation is that V.S.A. 16 §243 be amended as follows:

**“§ 243. Appointment; renewal; dismissal**

...

(c) Renewal and nonrenewal. A principal who has been continuously employed for more than two years in the same position has the right either to have his or her contract renewed, or to receive written notice of nonrenewal at least 90 days before the on or before February 1 of the year in which the existing contract expires.”

**Additional Recommendations**

The impetus for this report and subsequent examination is the need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school board members and administrators and the chain of command therein. Because Vermont has 277 school districts within varying governance structures and multiple school boards within supervisory unions, the lines of responsibility, oversight and evaluation are not always adhered to as spelled out in the above references.

Therefore, the Agency and education partners have developed the following purpose statements for each role, and hope to use this report as an opportunity to reinforce existing rules and best practices.

**Superintendents: Purpose**

Operations: The Superintendent provides executive leadership for education and operations within the system and responsible for:

- Overall system leadership.

- Maintaining focus on the board’s vision, and leading a collaborative process system-wide to develop an education work plan to achieve the goals of that vision.
- Promoting and evaluating quality of education and equity of opportunities within the system.
- Supporting the board by working with the chair to ensure effective board operation that enables the board to evaluate implementation of their mission and progress towards their goals.
- Directing services, programs and resources, to ensure the quality of learning opportunities and efficient use of system resources.
- Assuring compliance with policies set by the school board, and state and federal statutes and regulations.
- Appointing all non-licensed staff.
- Recommending one candidate for Board approval for licensed staff positions.
- Using multiple sources of data to assess student progress toward proficiency-based graduation and to capture evidence of learning with respect to the Education Quality Standards.

**The Superintendent is accountable to the board and to the state for operating within statute and regulations.**

**Superintendents: Sample Indicators of Success**

- Decisions are made strategically on behalf of and in service of school board policies and mission.
- Superintendent engages in intentional leadership development within the system.
- Superintendent supports conversations about students and outcomes through SU level staff and building leaders.
- Faculty and staff can articulate mission/vision and focus on students, as well as what they are doing to advance learning and systems consistency across and within building(s).
- Both students and educators engaged in continuous learning.
- Leadership teams have clear expectations and accountability.
- Regular staff evaluations do take place, both at the administrative and building level.
- The District has a clear focus reflecting professionalism, shared leadership and a long-term plan for the future.

**Principals: Purpose**

Instructional Leadership: principals are responsible for:

- Serving as instructional leaders.
  - Managing and developing staff professional skills
  - Championing and supporting a shared vision of student success
- Cultivating a safe, supportive, and inclusive school climate that is conducive to learning.
- Directing day-to-day operations within the school.
- Contributing to the development of and ensuring the implementation of the continuous improvement action plan.
- Consistent with SU/SD evaluation systems, supervising and evaluating staff with an emphasis on improving teaching and learning.
- Coordinating resources, time, structures and roles effectively to promote and support student success using multiple sources of data.
- Providing clear and timely communications to community members and families regarding school progress and well-being.
- Developing building-specific procedures consistent with district-level policy and educational vision.

**Principals are accountable to the Superintendent.**

**Principals: Sample Indicators of Success**

- Consistency across the school with respect to instruction, use of data, and expectations.
- Intentional development of teacher leadership/leveraging of teaching expertise to improve instruction.
- Resources of the school system are managed cost-effectively.
- All educators receive timely, high quality feedback and support.
- Climate indicators suggest strong positive school climate, and where data suggests needs, principal directs improvement efforts related to those needs.
- Evidence of support for professional learning and collaboration, including use of meeting time for focus on improving teaching.
- Instructional staff members are provided regular evaluation.
- Principals invested in staying in their schools to engage in continuous improvement over time (resulting in low levels of turnover).

**School Board in a Supervisory District: Purpose**

Systems governance. The Board:

- Sets the mission and vision for the district.
- Uses the mission to guide decision-making.
- Sets performance goals for the district.

- Establishes local policies aligned across the Supervisory District consistent with the minimum standards established by the [State Board of Education](#).
- Employs and supervises the Superintendent (sole direct employee of the Board).
- Holds the Superintendent accountable for developing a strategy and education work plan to achieve District or SU goals.
- Negotiates districtwide employment contracts.

**School boards are accountable to voters, and subject to the laws and regulations of the state.**

### **School Board Sample Indicators of Success**

The Board:

- Approves and provides oversight of implementation of the district education plan and relevant performance indicators.
- Approves proposed budget and submit to voters.
- Monitors system performance against the budget.
- Reviews and updates policies on a routine basis to reflect changing statutory and regulatory context, and evolving system's priorities.
- Determines capital project priorities.
- Reviews and provides feedback to Superintendent on an annual basis.
- Maintains a strong focus on outcomes and indicators of performance, as evidenced in meeting agendas and minutes.
- Approves school continuous improvement plans, and reviews regular performance reports as provided by Superintendent.
- Boards should set annual goals for themselves and all meetings should have an agenda built around those goals.

### **Teachers: Purpose**

Instructional development and delivery: Teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining a strong, safe and supportive classroom climate that is conducive to learning.
- Knowing expectations for student learning, and developing and implementing high-quality opportunities to learn that engage learners and move all students systematically towards ambitious goals.
- Maintain fidelity to supervisory union action plan, and make decisions with consideration for system goals.
- Use data to inform teaching and to make teaching responsive to individual needs (personalization); based upon what is best for students (as opposed to adults).

**Teachers are accountable to the Principal.**

### **Teachers: Sample Indicators of Success**

- Student survey data indicates students feel teachers are invested in their safety and learning.
- Students indicate they feel challenged.
- Student outcomes suggest continuous improvement and progress towards goals.
- Teachers play a leadership role within schools and across schools, sharing expertise and providing mentoring in service of systems goals.
- Teachers engage in ongoing professional collaboration around improving teaching and learning, both within schools and across schools in the system, and within grade levels and across grade levels.
- Teachers are invested in staying in the school and working to make it strong.

### **Local councils or advisory committees: Purpose**

Building based councils or teams operate in an advisory capacity to the principal. They:

- Provide advice to the principal regarding school policies.
- Suggest, develop and support strategies for partnerships within the community.
- Provide advice on ways to improve or maintain a positive climate within the school.
- Serve as liaisons between the community and the school.

### **Local councils or advisory committees: Sample Indicators of Success**

- Parents and community members have structured opportunities to provide feedback to the principal on a range of issues, including school climate and improvement initiatives.
- Local council meets on a regular, scheduled basis with building leaders, as evident in minutes.
- There are strong partnerships between the school and the surrounding community.
- Community members attend school events.

### **Agency Contact**

For more information on this report, contact Greg Glennon, General Counsel, Vermont Agency of Education, at (802) 479-1756 or [greg.glennon@vermont.gov](mailto:greg.glennon@vermont.gov)